

**SPURGEON'S MEN: THE RESURGENCE
OF BAPTIST BELIEF AND PRACTICE
IN TASMANIA 1869-1884**

LAURENCE FREDERICK ROWSTON

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
University of Tasmania
March 2011

This thesis may be made available for loan and limited copying
in accordance with the Copyright Act 1968 and later.

Laurence Frederick Rowston, March 2011

I confirm that this thesis is entirely my own work and contains no material which has been accepted for a degree or diploma by the University or any other institution, except by way of background information and duly acknowledged in the thesis, and to the best of my knowledge and belief no material previously published or written by another person except where due acknowledgement is made in the text of the thesis.

Laurence Frederick Rowston, March 2011

ABSTRACT

This thesis seeks to explain why a number of men from Spurgeon's College, London, started arriving in Tasmania in 1869 to begin a new phase of Baptist work. It considers their impact on the lives of previously established Nonconformist churches and the ramifications of their association of churches formed in 1884. This thesis argues that a rebirth of the Baptist life and conviction began with the influx of these men from the Pastors' College in London.

The work of the Strict and Particular Baptists had begun in the 1830s, but the churches under the care of the Rev Henry Dowling were sectarian in their outlook and made few gains. Their decline, to a certain extent, mirrored the eclipse of the Hyper-Calvinist Baptists in England. The arrival of Alfred William Grant in July 1869 was the first of many from the Pastors' College. A further influx of men from the College, which began in earnest at the end of 1879, was assisted greatly by the visits to the colony of Spurgeon's son, the Rev Thomas Spurgeon. By now their renewed Baptist theology and their rediscovery of mission broke free from entrenched patterns. They consolidated what they saw as their gains in 1884 with the formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania. The venture was significantly assisted over three decades by the Gibson family of Perth. This thesis seeks to assess the decline of the Particular Baptists in Tasmania and the rise of the evangelical Baptists under the Spurgeon banner.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I acknowledge the help and advice of my principal supervisor, Dr Tom Dunning, Head of the History and Classics Department of the University of Tasmania, who gave me patience and understanding; Dr Stefan Petrow who carefully read the thesis and made helpful suggestions; Dr Richard Ely and Susan Patterson, MA, for their diligent proof reading of the thesis and helpful suggestions. I also acknowledge the ever-helpful staff at the Reference section of the State Library of Tasmania; the Archives Office of Tasmania; Whitley College Library at the Baptist College, Parkville, Victoria; the Special/Rare Collections of the University of Tasmania, and the Joint Theological Library in Melbourne (now the Dalton McCaughey Library) and David Woodruff, Librarian of the Strict Baptist Historical Society in Dunstable who was so helpful on my visit. Alfred W Grant's descendent, Peter Grant, provided an extensive archive of newspaper cuttings from his AW Grant collection which formed the basis of chapter four.

CONTENTS

Abstract	i
Acknowledgments	ii
Contents	iii
Abbreviations	vii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1 - The Demise of the Particular Baptists in Tasmania	
Introduction	20
Launceston in the 1800s	20
The Christian Mission Church and the Launceston Tabernacle	22
Hyper-Calvinism and Closed Communion at York Street chapel	25
The Hobart and Deloraine Chapels	36
The Gibsons and the York Street Chapel	40
Conclusion	41
Chapter 2 - The Baptist Benefactors	
Introduction	43
Mary Ann Gibson	43
Anna Maria Blackler and Ellinthorpe Hall, Van Diemen's Land	45
David and Elizabeth Gibson	47
William and Mary Ann Gibson's early Married Life	49
The Congregationalists' Benefactors, Henry and Sarah Hopkins	57
Conclusion	59
Chapter 3 – The Influence of CH Spurgeon and His College	
Introduction	60

Nineteenth Century London	60
The Metropolitan Tabernacle	63
Publications	65
The Pastor's College	66
Financial Support	69
Staffing and Student Lodging	70
College Accommodation	71
The Evening Classes	72
Pastor's College Educational Priorities	73
Curriculum	78
Numbers	79
Church Planting	81
Farewells	84
Conclusion	85

Chapter 4 - The First of Spurgeon's Students in Tasmania

Introduction	87
Mary Ann Gibson and Spurgeon's Sermons	87
The Appointment of William Alfred Grant	88
Dawson Street Baptist, Ballarat, and Beyond	94
The Content and Style of Grant's Lectures and Sermons	104
Conclusion	110

Chapter 5 – Spurgeon's Men and Tuberculosis

Introduction	112
The Itinerant Methodists, Congregationalists and Others	112
Spurgeon's Men and the Scourge of Tuberculosis	117
The Difficulty in Finding Suitable Meeting Places and Difficulties with Housing	131

Maintenance of Church Structures 135

Itinerating Baptists 136

Conclusion 137

Chapter 6 - Disputes about Baptism

Introduction 139

Baptists in Van Diemen's Land 139

Robert McCullough at Longford 141

Disputes over Baptism in the Kentish Area 146

The Baptist–Methodist Dispute in Burnie of 1899 151

Conclusion 154

Chapter 7 - Tasmanian Baptists and Higher Criticism

Introduction 155

Charles Spurgeon and Higher Criticism 155

'The Bible is our Only Guide' for Tasmanian Baptists 160

Freethinkers in Tasmania 162

Baptist Lily Soundy Rejoicing in Old Truths 163

The 'Down Grade' Controversy and the Visit of Dr John Clifford 166

Theological Differences Between Tasmania and South Australia
Baptists 168

Conclusion 172

Chapter 8 - The Formation of an Association

Introduction 175

The Formation of the Baptist Union of Tasmania 175

The Rise of Nonconformist Associations in Tasmania 177

Associations among Baptists in Great Britain 180

Early Associations among Australian Baptists 183

The Gibsons' Latter years 184

The Subsequent Ventures of the Tasmanian Baptist Association 188

Conclusion 195

Conclusion 197

Appendices:

A Map of Launceston in 1885 205

B Map of Tasmania with place names 206

C Spurgeon's College Students in Tasmania 207

Bibliography 209

ABBREVIATIONS

DH Devon Herald

LEx Launceston Examiner

S&T Sword and Trowel

SB Southern Baptist

THRA Tasmanian Historical Research Association

TSA Tasmanian State Archives

